

Re: Closing Day

Jonathan Hine

University of Virginia. USA

>This has been an experiment that we should be able to learn from. I would
> be very interested in receiving «feedback» from participants that might
>help us to design future on-line activities better.

Seán —You asked for it. Live colloquia (in physical halls) are often sleepy affairs, sometimes enlivened by an occasional curmudgeon, but often poorly understood because someone mumbles, another gets on his soap-box, while a third repeats the question that was just answered. Sometimes the *lingua franca* is more shackled than *franca* for some of the participants.

1. The best description I have for what you achieved with Doug, Anthony and Michael was this: I sat in a room with almost 200 other interested people. Everyone could hear every word that everyone else said. No one was interrupted. And almost all the comments were articulate, well-composed and thoughtfully contributed to the discussion. (Most of us do read the screen before pressing the SEND button.)

2. There is no way you can achieve that kind of clarity and intellectual effectiveness except with the on-line colloquium. Congratulations on passing a historical and incredibly important milestone in the pursuit of knowledge. Scholarly exchange will never be the same, and you proved

that we don't have to be lavishly-funded scientists to enjoy the benefits of technology.

3. I do NOT favor the «chat-room» format, even if you do overcome the technical hurdles. We simply won't all be equally able to enjoy the format. And I very much appreciated the depth of the postings. A chat room would include less helpful material and I would not want to wade through that. The list-serve format allowed me to download the discussion and read it at my leisure (important when most of the people in the «room» have to come and go to work). I do not mind the one-day delay in seeing the effects. All we have to do is allow the colloquium to run long enough. I think you did that with a ten-day event.

4. You might consider posting a how-to guide of your lessons learned and any helpful feedback. I have been so impressed by what you have done that I have recommended it to dozens of scholars, including social scientists, evaluators, and anthropologists. Let us know (on ATSA-L, LANTRA, FLEFO, etc.) if you do.

5. It was as exciting to watch the colloquium take shape as it was to participate. The apparently «accidental» early opening was a positive feature. Having the presenters post their back-and-forth preparations for their papers can be illuminating and exciting to the audience.

6. By current standards, graphics played a small part, but I recommend you never rely on them in the papers. Although I enjoy the latest browsers here at the University of Virginia, I never did see any of the circles. Fortunately, the texts described them well enough that I did not need the pictures. A planetary colloquium will always include participants who are using telnet and ancient text-based e-mail systems to participate. Re-posting the texts on the list-server was an excellent idea. I would not have been able to read «transferre»... otherwise. For some reason, the link to it was broken when I was perusing the Web site 5-10 March 1997.

7. I thought the thread «listening to the Portuguese» turned out to be entertaining,

enlightening, and prophetic of the possibilities of the medium (no pun on Doug's material here!). It was a marvelous, real-life example of many of the very issues we were discussing! I recommend there always be a *lingua franca*. Those who wish to post in their favourite tongues should feel free to do so, either providing a translation or synopsis in the *lingua franca* or inviting a colleague also at the colloquium to provide it. In the latter case, the cooperating participants could agree ahead of time or before the posting to do that. Obviously a «chat room» could accommodate this even less easily than your on-line colloquium. On the other hand (OTOH - I know!) we could let events unfold as they did with Haroldo, Joao & Co. ...